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SCIENCE

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CONTENTS

<i>The Present Condition of the Social Sciences:</i> PROFESSOR CHARLES A. ELLWOOD	469
<i>Work of the National Research Council</i>	475
<i>Scientific Events:—</i>	
<i>Celebration in Honor of Dr. Henry Fairfield Osborn; The Laboratory of the U. S. Fisheries Biological Station at Woods Hole; The American Psychological Association; The Section of Education of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.</i>	477
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	479
<i>University and Educational News</i>	482
<i>Discussion and Correspondence:—</i>	
<i>Botany and Common Names of Plants: WILLARD N. CLUTE. Lacepède or Lacépède: DR. W. J. HOLLAND. The Forbes-Winslow Memorial Hospital: MARGARET FORBES WINSLOW</i>	483
<i>Quotations:—</i>	
<i>Increased Rank and More Authority for Medical Officers</i>	485
<i>Scientific Books:—</i>	
<i>Newman on the Biology of Twins: H. H. W. Ries's Economic Geology: PROFESSOR ALFRED C. LANE</i>	486
<i>Special Articles:—</i>	
<i>Experiments with a Foucault Pendulum: WILL C. BAKER</i>	489
<i>The Philadelphia Meeting of the National Academy of Sciences</i>	492

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THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES¹

A NEW world is being born. Out of the chaos and the conflict of the present it seems certain that great social changes are bound to emerge. At the birth of this new social world it is the social sciences, not the physical, which must preside. Yet we who are interested in the development of the social sciences must candidly ask ourselves how far they are fitted to assist in the birth of a new social world. How far are they fitted to lead and to guide in the work of social reconstruction which must follow the World War? Do they command such general respect and confidence that the masses will turn to them for guidance to avoid the mistakes of the past and to make secure the foundations for a worthy civilization in the future? Are their leaders so united on fundamentals that, though they may differ regarding minor details, yet they substantially agree on the general direction which reconstruction in our political, economic, educational, domestic and general social life should take? Can, in brief, the social sciences present such an accurate body of information and of generalizations from facts that in this crisis sane men will turn to them voluntarily for guidance, much as they would to the physical sciences if any one were called upon to build a bridge?

Such questions as these are of more than merely academic significance. Germany has taught the world in this war the value and the possibilities of social organization;

¹ An address before the local chapter at the University of Missouri of Alpha Zeta Pi, a society for encouraging scholarship and research in the social sciences.